

Parents and Carer Series – Scheduling Your Work

The transition to working from home has required many of us to reassess how we schedule our work whilst managing our various caring and home responsibilities. This is particularly the case for Parents and Carers of young children in school who require higher levels of supervision to complete their schoolwork. During this time, flexibility is key.

To support its staff, the University will be **flexible and understanding** of a variety of circumstances. If you can work at least 25 hours of a 35-hour week (pro-rated at 70% for part time staff), this will be deemed a full working week for pay purposes. Hours may be spread out across the week. As the emphasis during this time is on a **contribution of outcomes**, this may look different for each person. For example, for full time staff, the 25 hours may be comprised of 2-3 hours each morning and afternoon over 5 days, 3.5 hours per day over 7 days, or even make 8-9 hours over 3 days.

The University is relying on the **sense and empathy of supervisors** to make decisions about how we can keep people engaged in work. You are encouraged to have a conversation with your supervisor about what reasonable contributions you can make during this time. The [Community Wellbeing team](#) is here to assist staff members in working with supervisors to ensure the best arrangements are in place for staff, families and the workplace.

Beyond flexibility, the below tips and suggestions have been collated from various sources and members of the ANU community to help others schedule their time to best contribute to work and home life. Remember not all families or work roles are the same, so you should consider your own personal circumstances to determine what works best for you.

- **Task planning with a checklist** - Checklists will never go out of fashion because ticking off tasks as we complete them can be quite rewarding.
- **Time Estimates** - Before scheduling tasks and timeframes be realistic about the time available and time required. A good rule of thumb is to assume it will take you double the time of your initial estimate.
- **What's Important Now (WIN)** – Clarify (and reclarify as required) with your supervisor about what the top-priority issues are in the current context. While working from home, it can be easy to feel compelled to project the appearance of productivity, but this can lead to working on tasks that are more immediate and not necessarily more important.
- **Deep or Shallow** – Consider the nature of the work to be completed. Is it cognitively demanding and require an ability to focus without distraction (Deep)? Or is it less cognitively demanding, logistical or administrative, and could be completed with a few (or a lot) of distractions (Shallow)?
- **Deep Work** - For deep work time, use the time when children require very little or no attention. You can try to get up early and work before the rest of the family wakes up or work when kids are already in bed. Also, deep work when your kids are preoccupied with themselves or busy playing games. During that time focus solely on the important tasks and avoid distractions at all costs.
- **Shallow Work** - For shallow work time do small tasks when you don't have to be entirely focused. Read emails and do minor work when your children need more attention. File any emails/tasks that you come across requiring more attention for deep work time.
- **Shifts** - If you share caring responsibilities, you may consider working in shifts to ensure you each get some uninterrupted time to apply to work tasks. Shifts could be split between morning and afternoon each day, or over the week i.e. Monday to Wednesday and Thursday to Sunday. Be conscious of not



taking too many shifts back to back i.e. aim for no more than two days in a row, or if you took the afternoon shift, ask your partner to do the bedtime shift.

- **Boundaries** - Stick to your routine where possible and schedule your work in the time you have allotted to work – don't cut into family/personal time that you have set aside. Be comfortable in voicing this with colleagues and in return be respectful of this time with your colleagues.
- **Celebrate Your Wins** – To maintain momentum spend a moment or two acknowledging what you have been able to accomplish that day, rather than fixating on what you still need to do.
- **Reward Yourself** - Consider rewarding yourself for reaching small milestones throughout the week e.g. completing a document, clearing your inbox, or finishing your checklist for the day or week. Get creative with your rewards.

Want more information about scheduling work?

Read

- HBR - [Is It Even Possible to Focus on Anything Right Now?](#)
- HBR - [3 Tips to Avoid WFH Burnout](#)
- Forbes - [9 Tips To Be Productive When Working At Home During COVID-19](#)

Listen

- ABC RN - [This Working Life Podcast](#) – 20 April 2020

Watch

- Insider - [14 parents share their work from home plans, and tricks](#)

Have feedback, questions or would like to suggest other topics? Email community.wellbeing@anu.edu.au.